



Sam Brownback

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CONTACT ERIK HOTMIRE

BROWNBACK DISTURBED BY OPPRESSION OF MINORITIES BY IRAN

WASHINGTON – U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback spoke at a Capitol Hill news conference today joining Sen. Charles E. Schumer in cosponsoring S.Con.Res.39 condemning ‘in the strongest possible terms’ the recent arrest of 13 Jewish community leaders in Iran.

“For those who mistakenly believe that Iran has somehow been pursuing a more ‘moderate’ course, these recent actions by the Iranian government with regard to these 13 Jewish leaders is a bitter reminder of how little the regime has changed,” Brownback said.

“The alleged ‘crime’ of these Jewish leaders is spying for Israel and the United States. The evidence being used against them is the fact that they studied Hebrew and encouraged other Jews to go to Israel. Now they face possible execution.

“These are all alleged crimes and evidence, and so far, none of the 13 Jews have been charged with a specific crime or allowed visitation rights for the first two months of their detention. I am deeply concerned. Over the past five years, five Jews have been executed by the Iranian government without the benefit of due process. I sincerely hope that the same fate does not await these innocent Iranian Jews.

“It is astounding that, as we conclude the 20th century, there are still places in the world where people are imprisoned, charged with espionage and possibly face the death penalty because of their religious beliefs.

“I hope the president will heed the Congress’s call to urge all nations having relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran to condemn the treatment of religious minorities in Iran and call for the release of all prisoners held on the basis of their religious beliefs. I also hope that the U.S. will maintain its current policy towards Iran unless and until that country moderates its treatment of religious minorities,” Brownback said.

While repression of Iran’s religious minorities is nothing new, the recent arrests alongside a significant increase in the level of anti-Semitic propaganda from the regime, has many observers concerned that a new wave of repression is being contemplated by the regime.

Iran’s Jewish community has a 2,500 year history and currently numbers about 30,000 people. Prior to the Islamic Revolution, the community had numbered roughly 100,000 people, but tens of thousands of Iran’s Jews were forced to flee the country.

Brownback is chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs. Also in attendance at the news conference was Sen. Charles E. Schumer and Reps. Brad Sherman, Joe Scarborough, Joe Crowley, Peter Deutch, Gary Ackerman, and Nita Lowey.